

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ROME 8928

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF MORO'S ASSASSINATION

SUMMARY: IN KIDNAPPING AND ASSASSINATING ALDO MORO, THE
RED BRIGADES HAVE REMOVED ITALY'S KEY POLITICAL FIGURE
AND HAVE BECOME A SERIOUS MENACE TO CIVIL ORDER. BUT THEY
HAVE NOT SUCCESSFULLY STRUCK A BLOW AT THE HEART OF THE
STATE, AS THEY CLAIMED, AND HAVE NOT UNSETTLED THE PRESENT
GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. WHILE MORO'S DEATH OPENS MANY
IMPORTANT POLITICAL QUESTIONS WHICH WILL TAKE SOME MONTHS
TO ANSWER, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE PRESENT MAJORITY GOVERNMENT,
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WITH CONTINUING CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST
COOPERATION, WILL CONTINUE UP TO THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION IN DECEMBER. BUT ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL RED
BRIGADES' STRIKE AGAINST A PROMINENT NATIONAL POLITICAL
FIGURE WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN DEMANDS FOR THE FORMA-
TION OF AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MURDER OF ALDO MORO RAISES A SERIES OF FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM FUTURE OF ITALIAN POLITICS--THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, THE POLITICAL DIRECTION THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WILL FOLLOW, THE RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PARTY TO THE COMMUNISTS AND TO THE LAY PARTIES, THE SUCCESSION TO PRESIDENT LEONE AND THE FUTURE FORM OF THE GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. THESE QUESTIONS ARE INTERRELATED AND IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE ANY OF THEM CAN BE ANSWERED. BUT WHILE THE FULL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE MORO CASE CANNOT YET BE MEASURED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION.

RED BRIGADES

2. WITH MORO'S KIDNAPPING THE RED BRIGADES HAVE HAD BOTH A DEFEAT AND A VICTORY. POLITICALLY THE RED BRIGADES HAVE SUFFERED A CLEAR REVERSE. THEIR PURPORTED AIM OF DRIVING APART THE COMMUNISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, OF PROVOKING POLITICAL REPRESSION, AND OF GAINING THE SUPPORT OF THE ULTRA-LEFT HAS SO FAR FAILED COMPLETELY. INDEED THE SUM EFFECT OF THE MORO CASE HAS BEEN THE REVERSE OF WHAT THEY EVIDENTLY SOUGHT. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS HAS BEEN CLOSE. ALL ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUPS IN ITALIAN SOCIETY, CONFIDENTIAL

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INCLUDING VIRTUALLY ALL THE RADICAL LEFT, HAVE EXPRESSED STRONG, PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE RED BRIGADES. THE BULK OF THE EXTREME LEFT HAS IN FACT NOW TAKEN AN EXPLICIT ANTI-TERRORIST STANCE, DENOUNCING THE RED BRIGADES' ACTIONS AS HAVING A COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY EFFECT. ITALIAN SOCIETY AT LARGE HAS REACTED FROM THE MOMENT OF THE KIDNAPPING TO THE PRESENT WITH GREAT UNITY AND UNIFORM REVULSION. THE TRADE UNIONS HAVE BEEN ON THE VANGUARD OF OPPOSITION TO THE TERRORISTS. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED CERTAIN DECREE LAWS ON POLICE POWERS WHICH SOMEWHAT LIMIT CIVIL LIBERTIES, THERE HAS BEEN NO REAL REPRESSION, EITHER IN TERMS OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS OR PUBLIC MOOD, AND EVEN PROPOSALS FOR REINSTITUTING THE DEATH PENALTY HAVE GONE NOWHERE. IN ADDITION THE GOVERNMENT SUCCESSFULLY WITHSTOOD THE RED BRIGADES' LURES TO COMPROMISE AND THE PUBLIC STOOD SOLIDLY BEHIND IT. IN SHORT, THE RED BRIGADES' PRESUMED HOPES OF DIVIDING ITALIAN SOCIETY AND CAUSING A SPLIT AMONG THE PARTIES HAVE UP TO NOW BEEN FRUSTRATED.

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3. AT THE SAME TIME THE RED BRIGADES HAVE HAD AN UN-
DENIABLE VICTORY. THEY HAVE REMOVED THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE
MOST INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL FIGURE. THEY HAVE SHOWN
SPECTACULARLY THAT THEY CAN OPERATE THROUGHOUT ITALY
WITH IMPUNITY. HAVING OUTWITTED THE SECURITY SERVICES
AT EVERY STAGE OF THE GAME, THEY HAVE FURTHER
DEMORALIZED THEM AND HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY WITH A
SENSE OF IMPOTENCE IN THE FACE OF TERRORIST ACTS.
THE RED BRIGADES HAVE ACHIEVED UNIQUE INTERNATIONAL
PRESTIGE BY GAINING A FORM OF "RECOGNITION" FROM SUCH
PROMINENT FIGURES AS THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE OPPE. MOREOVER, THEY HAVE IMMOBILIZED
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THE GOVERNMENT FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS, WITH THE

ONLY MAJOR PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY--SUCH AS ABORTION LEGISLATION--HAVING BEEN TAKEN SOLELY AS A RESULT OF IMPENDING PUBLIC REFERENDA WHICH THE PARTIES DESPERATELY WANT TO AVOID.

4. IN SHORT, IS IS THE RED BRIGADES, NOT THE AUTHORITIES OF THE STATE, WHO HOLD THE INITIATIVE AT THE MOMENT. IF THEY WANT, THEY CAN MAKE TERRORISM THE BASIC FACT OF ITALIAN LIFE. ALREADY THIS MONTH THEY HAVE SHOT EIGHT PERSONS, APART FROM MORO, AND HAVE FIREBOMBED THREE IMPORTANT INDUSTRIAL FIRMS. THOUGH REJECTED BY ITALIAN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, THEY OBVIOUSLY ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF FANATICS AND HAVE REPORTEDLY INFILTRATED IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY CONSTITUTE A MENACE TO CIVIL ORDER. A FURTHER SUCCESSFUL KIDNAPPING OR ASSASSINATION OF A MAJOR POLITICAL LEADER COULD SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. NONETHELESS, FOR ALL THE QUESTIONS THEY HAVE RAISED BY REMOVING MORO AND FOR ALL THE RISKS THEY CREATE FOR THE FUTURE, THE RED BRIGADES HAVE SO FAR NOT CAUSED ANY FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL DISRUPTION.

THE IMPACT ON THE PARTIES

5. THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS, THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE MORO CASE ENJOYED THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL THE PARTIES; EXCEPT THAT THE SOCIALISTS AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER, GIUSEPPE SARAGAT, DIFFERED IN FAVORING SOME NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE TERRORISTS. TO THIS EXTENT, THE COOPERATION OF THE PRESENT GOVERNING COALLITION SUCCESSFULLY EMERGED FROM A SEVERE TEST. DESPITE UNDOUBTED ANXIETIES AND TENSIONS, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY ONCE AGAIN

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MAINTAINED ITS TRADITIONAL UNITY AT A MOMENT OF DEEP STRESS. AT THE SAME TIME, COOPERATION AMONG THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND THE COMMUNIST LEADERS REMAINED STRONG. THE ATTEMPTS BY SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION BY DIVIDING THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND DRIVING A WEDGE BETWEEN THEM AND THE COMMUNISTS CAME TO NOTHING. FOR THE TIME BEING, THEREFORE, THE PRESENT GOVERNING FORMULA REMAINS FIRMLY INTACT AND THE PREVAILING DESIRE APPEARS TO BE TO KEEP THE OVERALL POLITICAL SITUATION AS STABLE AND, INDEED, AS STATIC AS POSSIBLE.

6. NONETHELESS, MORO'S DEATH LEAVES A SIGNIFICANT VOID--BOTH FOR THE COMMUNISTS AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. THE CHRISTAIN DEMOCRATS HAVE LOST THEIR LEADER; THE COMMUNISTS HAVE LOST THEIR INTERLOCUTOR.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS WILL THEREFORE BE HOW THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS GO ABOUT REORGANIZING THE DC
INTO A POST-MORO PARTY. NO ONE CAN KNOW AND FEW ARE
AT THIS STAGE EVEN WILLING TO SPECULATE ON THE OUTCOME
OF THIS PROCESS. CERTAINLY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
FACE A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF TRANSITION, WHEN SOME OF
THE BATTLES OF THE PAST WILL HAVE TO BE FOUGHT AOUT AGAIN
IF THE CONSERVATIVES MOUNT A CHALLENGE TO THE
MORO LINE. BUT WE ANTICIPATE THAT ANDREOTTI AND
ZACCAGNINI WILL PREVAIL AND THAT AT LEAST THROUGH THE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW
THE MORO LINE-MAINTAINING THE PRESENT MAJORITY ARRANGE-
MENT, WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST LEADERS
COLLABORATING QUIETLY BEHIND THE SCENES. THUS THE
DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN IN THE COMING MONTHS WILL
AFFECT WHETHER IN THE LONGER TERM THE CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS MAINTAIN THE PRESENT MAJORITY GOVERNMENT,
MOVE TOWARD CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS OR
WILL SEEK SOME NEW FORM OF COALITION WITH THE
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SOCIALISTS.

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7. THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
DEPENDS LARGELY ON HOW THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS SORT
THEMSELVES OUT. FOR THE COMMUNISTS, MORO'S LOSS IS
A SEVERE BLOW. IN THE PRESENT PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY
THE OVERRIDING COMMUNIST OBJECTIVE WILL THEREFORE BE
TO MAINTAIN WHAT THEY HAVE ONLY RECENTLY ACHIEVED. BARRING
SOME NEW CRISIS, WE THINK IT IS UNLIKELY
THAT THEY WILL PRESS FOR A LARGER ROLE IN THE
GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.
INSTEAD THEY ARE APT TO SEEK TO CAPITALIZE ON THE
PRESENT SITUATION THROUGH DEEPENING CONSULTATION AND
COOPERATION AMONG THE PARTIES OF THE GOVERNING
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MAJORITY AND ESPECIALLY WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.
THE SOCIALISTS, TOO, WILL BE LOOKING TO SEE WHETHER
THEY CAN MANIPULATE THE SITUATION TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.
CRAXI IS CLEARLY WORRIED AT THE PROSPECT OF HIS
PARTY'S BEING SHUNTED TO THE SIDELINES AS A RESULT
OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO BIG PARTIES; HE WILL
PROBABLY SEIZE WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AS MAY COME ALONG
TO TRY TO FORGE SOME NEW TYPE OF ALLIANCE WITH THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

8. MORO'S DEATH ALSO OPENS THE QUESTION OF THE PRESI-
DENTIAL SUCCESSION AND THIS ISSUE WILL INEVITABLY BECOME
ENTANGLED WITH THE BROADER POLITICAL ONES. THERE IS
NO FRONT RUNNER. FANFANI, ANDREOTTI AND ZACCAGNINI
ARE ALL CLEAR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES.
ON THE LAY SIDE, THERE IS LA MALFA, BUT HE IS GENERALLY
FELT TO BE TOO OLD AND TOO MERCURIAL FOR THE POSITION.
THE SOCIALISTS ARE HOBbled BY THE LACK OF GOOD
CANDIDATES. OF THE TWO WHO ARE FREQUENTLY MENTIONED,
DE MARTINO IS CONSIDERED EVEN BY HIS CLOSEST POLITICAL
ALLY, MANCA, TO BE TOO WEAK FOR THE POSITION, WHILE
GIOLITTI, AS A RRENEGADE COMMUNIST, IS FELT TO BE
UNACCEPTABLE TO THE PCI. BUT THE SCOPE FOR TRADE-OFFS
AND BROAD POLITICAL DEALS IS GREAT. THE SOCIALISTS, IN

PARTICULAR, WILL SEEK TO USE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AS THE BASIS FOR SOME POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

CONCLUSION

9. ITALY FACES A TOUGH PERIOD AHEAD. THE BASIC
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SITUATION WHICH HAS HELPED TO BREED POLITICAL
TERRORISM--UNEMPLOYMENT, INADEQUATE SOCIAL SERVICES,
LACK OF A STRONG POLITICAL OPPOSITION--WILL NOT BE
EASILY OR QUICKLY CORRECTED. THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES,
WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO COMBAT TERRORISM, ARE WEAKER
THAN EVER AND WILL NEED A LONG PERIOD OF REBUILDING IF
THEY ARE EVER TO BE EFFECTIVE. BUT FOR THE NEXT SIX
MONTHS, UNTIL A NEW PRESIDENT IS ELECTED, WE ANTICIPATE
A PERIOD OF RELATIVE POLITICAL CALM WITH THE PRESENT
GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT, BACKED BY CONTINUED COMMUNIST-
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC COOPERATION, TO REMAIN FIRM.
HOWEVER, ANOTHER SEVERE BLOW TO THE GOVERNMENT BY THE
RED BRIGADES WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN DEMANDS FOR
AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD
IN SOME WAY PARTICIPATE. GARDNER

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